

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of August 26, 2014**

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair John Quinn III, Selectmen Kevin T. Beal, Brad Denny, Dennis Donahue, Lynn Doney, Matthew Gadbois, Kenneth W. Goslant, K. David Maxwell, and James R. Wilson. Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Michele Braun (Zoning Administrator), Ramon Hudson (Road Foreman), Steven Jeffrey (Chair, Planning Commission), Arlington Supplee (Chair, Board of Listers), John Stevens (Brown Public Library Board of Trustees), John Boyer (Washington County Youth Services Bureau/Boys & Girls Club), Sarah Bartlett (Department of Environmental Conservation), Patricia Coppolino (Department of Environmental Conservation), Michael Smith (Weston & Sampson), Liza Nesbitt, David Nesbitt, Anne Donahue, Chris Donahue, Douglas Brukardt, Tim Ball, Paul E. Brown, Nancy Lavarney, Gerard Lavarney, Charles Morse, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Prior to the regular meeting, the Town Selectmen held a Public Hearing beginning at 7:00 p.m. in order to receive written or oral views on proposed revisions to the current Northfield Town Plan that was adopted in August 2009 and expired on August 12, 2014. The Town Plan was developed by the Northfield Planning Commission and addresses issues related to: Natural and Cultural Resources; Population; Housing; Economy; Transportation; Community Facilities and Services; Local Education; Energy; and Land Use. The proposed revisions incorporate data from the 2010 US Census and major changes include redesigned Zoning Districts; the prohibition of non-residential development on property above 1800 feet in elevation; enhanced protection of water resources; and a new section on flood resilience. Due to the population size of Northfield, this will be the second of two public hearings. The first was held on Tuesday, August 12, 2014.

Chair Quinn asked if there were any questions or comments. Like many of those present, Charles Morse read the front page story in last week's *Northfield News* (08/21/14) with the headline "New Northfield Town Plan to Limit Rural Development to Minimum Ten Acre Lots." He is concerned by this possibility. He stated that there are quite a number of Northfield properties located in flood zones that cannot be developed and he felt that this new restriction would further discourage economic growth beyond the downtown area. He felt that the Town Plan should allow for waivers when there is a solid proposal that would bring businesses and jobs here. Mr. Morse also is concerned about the proposed ban on non-residential development on higher elevation properties. He understands that this is being done in order to prevent the construction of industrial wind farms along the Northfield ridge but he feels that such a project might bring benefits to Northfield.

Anne Donahue had an overall favorable view of the proposed Town Plan and the vision it contains for the future of Northfield. However, she also believes that creating a ten (10) acre minimum lot size in the low density residential areas is a "radical change" that would take away individual property rights. Ms. Donahue felt that the average property owner who has a lot of three (3) acres or less would be especially harmed by this.

Planning Commission Chair Steven Jeffrey noted that the proposed Town Plan has been available for review on the municipal website for some time (as well as hardcopies available in the Municipal Building and Brown Public Library) and there is nothing in the document about the proposed ten (10) acre requirement. The Town Plan does have the maintenance of the "rural character of the countryside" as one of its listed goals and at the previous public hearing Zoning Administrator Michele Braun brought up the possibility of increasing the minimum lot size to ten (10) acres as one example of how this might be achieved. Mr. Jeffrey added that the Planning Commission is scheduled to revise Northfield's zoning regulations next year and this is only one of the proposals that will be considered at that time. He stated that the proposed changes in zoning districts also would have the effect of opening up the Vermont Route 12 and 12A corridor to additional economic development. Chair Quinn confirmed that Ms. Braun had been trying to provide some indication of how zoning districts might be affected in the future should the proposed Town Plan be adopted.

Douglas Brukardt also was concerned by the newspaper article. He stated that the State of Vermont tried this approach before with the intent of preserving the state's rural areas and found that the measures taken were ineffective. Mr. Brukardt opposes the change because it would unfairly restrict use of his own property.

Paul Brown felt that past local and statewide attempts to safeguard Vermont's agricultural areas through minimum lot size requirements were not only ineffective but actually counterproductive. Residents do want open spaces protected but these kinds of restrictions do not achieve this. In addition, he felt that the prohibition of non-residential development above 1800 feet is overreaching since he, like many Vermonters, does not support a blanket ban of industrial wind farms. Mr. Brown sees some benefits from wind power and believes that opponents are having too much influence in the debate.

Kathleen Lott asked if having the "Future Land Use Districts" map incorporated into the Town Plan predetermines the decisions that will be made when the zoning regulations are revised. Ms. Braun stated that the map was created only to assist with the upcoming revisions, which must be consistent with the approved Town Plan. The Town Plan includes a number of tasks that may or may not be accomplished during its five-year term. This map is only a vision of where the Town might be headed during this timeframe. Mr. Jeffrey added that the State informed him late in the process that this map had to be included with the approved Town Plan. Ms. Braun stated that as the map is labeled "Future Land Use Districts," it should be viewed as a guideline for Northfield. Mr. Jeffrey confirmed that the map should be considered a blueprint for zoning district changes that might be adopted when the zoning regulations are revised. He added that this process will be fully transparent with many opportunities for public input with open meetings, public hearings, etc.

Selectman Gadbois has been reading through the proposed Town Plan and it was his initial impression that the plan is more concerned with retaining the present situation rather than encouraging economic growth. Chair Quinn felt that given the issues raised tonight, the full Select Board should review and discuss the document again before providing its formal approval. Selectman Denny noted that most of the concerns raised tonight relate to zoning issues that are not part of the proposed Town Plan itself. In addition, any future decisions made to revise zoning districts would not affect properties that already have been subdivided.

Mr. Brukardt remains concerned that it seems to be the Planning Commission's intent to go in the direction of the ten (10) acre minimum lot size requirement. He sees no valid reason for this. Mr. Brown would like to know where the proposed prohibition of development along the Northfield ridge came from. Selectman Beal believes that this was the result of concerns that residents expressed about this. He added that the language in the document is similar to that contained in the Town Plans of neighboring communities that also had this issue arise. Selectman Denny stated that concerns about industrial wind farms were expressed early in the process when the Planning Commission first was holding open meetings on possible revisions to the Town Plan.

There being no other questions or comments, the Public Hearing closed at 7:47 p.m. Chair Quinn noted that this matter will be discussed at the next regular Select Board meeting (09/09/14). The regular meeting then began immediately.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE. The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA. There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)

- a. **John Boyer, Washington County Youth Services Bureau/Boys & Girls Club: Partnership for Success.** Mr. Boyer will be directing the outreach program "Partnership for Success" in Washington County. This program seeks to address drug and/or alcohol abuse by Washington youth by working with local governments, law enforcement agencies, schools, etc. There also are mental health issues that need to be explored and addressed locally. Local governments can assist in the process by maintaining sufficient levels of recreational and other activities in their communities so that youths don't turn to drugs and/or alcohol due to a lack of healthy alternatives. As the first step in this outreach effort, Mr. Boyer is meeting with the Town Selectmen in order to establish contacts in Northfield that would be willing to assist in this effort. He added that the shaping of local attitude has an important role in reducing the "risk factors" that lead to substance abuse.

Selectmen Maxwell and Beal suggested that the local Boys & Girls Club and the Northfield Recreation Committee might be good initial contacts. Selectman Beal added that the Brown Public Library also has various youth programs that try to address the problem of “bored youth.” The Select Board members thanked Mr. Boyer for beginning this effort that could have a very beneficial impact on the Northfield community and its young people.

- b. **Sarah Bartlett and Patricia Coppolino, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC): Brownfields Area Wide Planning in Vermont.** Ms. Coppolino stated that the DEC has been working with the Northfield Conservation Commission and Zoning Administrator Braun to develop a proposal to identify, clean up, and reuse Brownfields properties in Northfield. She explained that the term “Brownfields” referred to properties that in the past had produced, used, or stored hazardous materials and still retained their presence on site. Ms. Coppolino stated that having a local plan in place allows municipalities to apply for grant funds so that these sites can be decontaminated and made ready for future use. A hired consultant would be of great assistance in locating possible sites that could be redeveloped, drafting the community-wide plan, etc. Ms. Bartlett added that having an Area-Wide Plan (AWP) in place helps the community to focus upon its own individual needs. There are AWP grant funds available from EPA and other agencies. The DEC already has funds available to assist Northfield with the development of the AWP as a preliminary step before additional grant funds can be obtained. Ms. Bartlett stated that having this AWP would greatly benefit Northfield in future economic planning as well as allowing for the implementation of the recommendations provided by the Vermont Downtown Action Team (VDAT). Selectman Denny felt that the timing of this proposal is just right for Northfield given the recent merger of the Town and Village as well as the existence of an active Economic Development Committee. Selectman Maxwell asked what the Select Board could do tonight to further this process other than providing its general support. Ms. Coppolino would like the Town to help with providing outreach to local property owners who may or may not be initially receptive to this type of program. She added that several possible Brownfields sites already have been identified here. Chair Quinn supports this effort and agreed with Selectman Denny that the timing is right for Northfield. Ms. Coppolino stated that \$43,000 in DEC funds have been set aside for Northfield to begin this project. The DEC would like hired consultants working on this by mid-November. The consensus of the Select Board was to encourage this process going forward. Manager Schulz and Zoning Administrator Braun will work with DEC on this. Ms. Braun added that the community is very fortunate to have Ms. Coppolino, a Northfield resident and former member of the Northfield Conservation Commission, working with us on this.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **August 12, 2014 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #05-15.** Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve Warrant #05-15 in the amount of \$159,144.40. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**
- b. **Bi-Weekly Payroll through August 17, 2014.** Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$73,504.88. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Approval of 2014 Northfield Town Plan.** This matter will be tabled until the Select Board has had the opportunity to fully review and discuss the proposed revisions to the Town Plan. If substantial changes are made to the current draft, an additional public hearing will need to be held.

- b. Approval of 2014 Grand List Errors and Omissions.** Lister Chair Arlington Supplee is asking the Select Board to correct the 2014 Grant List by combining two (2) parcels and lowering the valuation of the combined parcel by \$84,920. He explained that one of the parcels had incorrectly been recorded as being 108.80 acres in size when it actually was only 39.80 acres. The property owner provided the Listers with his own survey that proved to be much more accurate than the 1990s one on file. Mr. Supplee added that he normally would wait until the following year to correct such a problem but in this case the disparity between the actual size of the parcel and the amount that the property owner was being charged was so great that he did not want to delay action. Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Beal, to correct the 2014 Grand List as requested by the Listers. **Motion passed 8-0-1, with Selectman Quinn abstaining.**
- c. Awarding of Highway Paving Bid Proposals.** Manager Schulz noted that the bid proposals had been locally advertised and submissions opened this afternoon at 2:30 p.m. There were four (4) bid proposals received: Green Mountain Paving (\$115.00 per ton); Johnson Paving Company (\$101.00 per ton); Pike Industries (\$84.85 per ton); and Springfield Paving (\$78.49 per ton). Even though Springfield Paving is the apparent low bidder, Highway Foreman Ramon Hudson has some reservations about awarding the bid to them based on conversation with them this afternoon. The concern is that Springfield Paving would provide only a one inch (1") shim on the roadways and would not pave some of the lower lying roads. It is Mr. Hudson's recommendation that the Town award the bid to Pike Industries, which had only a slightly higher bid amount and does not raise any concerns regarding the work to be done. After additional conversation, it was the consensus of the Select Board to delay action on this matter until it has been researched further and a firm recommendation has been provided.
- d. Awarding of Sand & Gravel Bid Proposals.** Manager Schulz said that the bid proposals had been locally advertised and the submissions opened this afternoon at 3:00 p.m. R.E. Tucker was the low bidder for winter sand (\$10.25 per cubic yard delivered and \$9.75 per cubic yard in the pit) and Northeast Material Group was the low bidder for crushed gravel (\$15.05 per cubic yard delivered and \$8.40 per cubic year in the pit). Chair Quinn would like the sand and crushed gravel tested in the pit to ensure that it meets the Town's specifications. Mr. Hudson added that the specifications in the bid documents were developed by Manager Schulz when he worked for the Town of Berlin. Manager Schulz noted that the bid documents clearly stated that the road material will be tested before purchase. Chair Quinn believed that although R.E. Tucker's quote for crushed gravel (\$10.35 per cubic yard in the pit) is higher than Northeast Material Group's, it would be less expensive in the long run for the Town Highway Department to pick up gravel locally from R.E. Tucker's pits instead of having to travel to Northeast Material Group's pit in Barre. Selectman Maxwell asked if road materials are tested throughout the year. Manager Schulz confirmed they are and the Town reserves the right to change vendors if the material subsequently is found to be inferior. Mr. Hudson felt that the greater accessibility to R.E. Tucker's pits is very useful during Mud Season. Motion by Selectman Beal, seconded by Selectman Denny, to award the winter sand bid proposal to R.E. Tucker. **Motion passed 9-0-0.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Wilson, to award the crushed gravel bid proposal to R.E. Tucker. **Motion passed 9-0-0.** It was understood that both bid awards were contingent upon the road materials being tested and found to meet the Town's specifications.
- e. Authorization to Proceed on Fairground Road Bridge Replacement Project.** Manager Schulz stated that the Town petitioned FEMA to amend the original work order to allow for the increased width so that a pedestrian walkway can be installed on the new bridge (as the State of Vermont requested). FEMA approved this and increased the amount it will provide for the bridge replacement to \$1,074,855.80. FEMA will cover ninety percent (90%) of the total project costs, the State of Vermont will provide five percent (5%), and Northfield is responsible for the remaining five percent (5%).

Engineer Mike Smith (Weston & Sampson) noted that FEMA increased its original contribution amount by thirty percent (30%) because the State did request this larger bridge due to pedestrian safety concerns. He estimated the Town's responsibility at \$107,385.79, which includes the local share as well as paying for work that is considered "improvements" and therefore ineligible for FEMA funding. Bid proposals for the construction phase were opened earlier this year (06/18/14) and Blow & Cote was the low bidder at \$853,829; Mr. Smith recommends awarding the bid contract to them. Blow & Cote has passed Mr. Smith's background check and could start work in a couple weeks. A temporary bridge would be rented from the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) and put in place during the construction phase. Manager Schulz added that AOT has agreed to allow funds previously granted Northfield to perform work on Smith Hill Road to be used to cover expenses deemed ineligible for FEMA reimbursement. In addition, bonding authority for Tropical Storm Irene repairs already exists and has not been used to date. There also remains the possibility that FEMA will waive the local share responsibility and allow Northfield to make up the shortfall with community grant funds. Despite what had been promised earlier by FEMA and AOT, Selectman Goslant always felt there was the chance that Northfield would get stuck paying this local share amount. Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Beal, to award the Fairground Road Bridge Replacement contract to Blow & Cote in the amount of \$853,829. **Motion passed 9-0-0.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Denny, to appoint Manager Schulz as the Town's authorized representative and Finance Director Laurie Baroffio as the alternate representative for this project. **Motion passed 9-0-0.** Mr. Smith stated that he is always available should anyone have questions regarding this project.

- f. **Norwich University Request to Ease Parking Ban for Homecoming and Parent/Family Weekends.** Norwich University has requested that the parking ban on Crescent Avenue and Central Street be temporarily lifted for Homecoming Weekend (September 18-21) and Parent/Family Weekend (October 9-12). Motion by Selectman Maxwell, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve Norwich University's request provided that university officials work with the Northfield Emergency Services and Highway Department to ensure that there is no danger or inconvenience to the travelling public and/or emergency vehicles. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**
- g. **Approval of Special Town Meeting Warning (Tax Stabilization): Tuesday, November 4, 2014.** The Economic Development Committee has drafted a Tax Stabilization policy that requires voter authorization before it can go into effect. The warning's sole article reads as follows: *"Shall the voters authorize the Select Board to enter into tax stabilization contracts fixing and maintaining the valuation of certain grand list properties, fixing and maintaining the rates of tax applicable to such properties, fixing the amount of money which shall be paid as an annual tax upon such properties, and/or fixing the tax applicable to such property at a percentage of the annual tax, as authorized by 24 VSA §2741, provided that the term of any such contracts shall not exceed seven (7) years? (Australian Ballot)."* Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve and sign the warning. Kathleen Lott, who helped draft the proposed policy, asked why the article wording limited such agreements to seven (7) years when the policy allows for ten (10) year agreements. Manager Schulz noted that the policy itself requires that all ten (10) year agreements must obtain separate voter authorization prior to Select Board approval. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**
- h. **Approval of Final Design Loan Application for King Street Water Main Installation Project.** At the last meeting, the Select Board provided similar approval for the Central Street/Washington Street Water Main Installation Project. The loan documents now are ready for the work on King Street. Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Denny, to authorize Manager Schulz to sign the loan application documents. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**

- i. **Merger Transition Committee Recommendations Regarding Select Board Committees.** Chair Quinn had prepared a memo that proposed the committees to be retained, reconfigured, etc. as well as the Select Board members that would serve best upon them. The full list is as follows: **Budget & Financial Review** (Selectmen Donahue and Quinn); **Town Buildings & Energy** (Selectmen Denny, Gadbois, and Wilson); **Economic Development** (Selectmen Donahue, Goslant, Maxwell, and Quinn); **Norwich University** (Selectmen Denny and Quinn); **Highway Infrastructure Planning & Projects** (Selectmen Beal, Gadbois, and Wilson); **Public Safety** (Selectmen Doney, Goslant, Maxwell, and Quinn); and **Labor Agreement & Bargaining** (Selectmen Beal and Doney). Motion by Selectman Beal, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the committee appointments listed above. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**
 - j. **Designation of Voting Delegate for 2014 VLCT Annual Business Meeting.** Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to appoint Manager Schulz as Northfield's Designated Voting Delegate for the 2014 VLCT Annual Business Meeting. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**
 - k. **Status Reports: Various Projects.** There were none.
- VIII. **BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**
- a. **Annual Board Retreat.** Selectman Maxwell asked if there was any plan to hold a Board Retreat this year. Selectman Denny also would like a retreat held this year. Chair Quinn asked that scheduling the retreat be put on the next regular meeting agenda,
 - b. **Expansion of Two-Hour Weekday Parking Restrictions on Depot Square.** Selectman Goslant asked if this was still being considered. Manager Schulz will have an update for the next meeting on this.
 - c. **Mayo Block Parking Spaces.** Selectman Goslant felt that the parking spaces in front of the Northfield Savings Bank were too narrow for today's SUVs and pickup trucks. He would favor widening the spaces even if one were lost in the process. Manager Schulz will check with Road Foreman Hudson on this.
- IX. **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT.** Manager Schulz had nothing to add.
- X. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)**
- a. **John Stevens, Brown Public Library (BPL) Board of Trustees: Library Building Maintenance Issues.** Mr. Stevens had emailed a memo to the Select Board members that highlighted his Board's concerns regarding several maintenance issues. This included issues involving the building entrances that raised significant safety concerns. He asked if the Select Board members had the opportunity to review the document and whether any action was planned. Chair Quinn would like the Town Buildings & Energy Committee to look into this matter first and then report back to the full Select Board.
- XI. **ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Beal, seconded by Selectman Wilson, to adjourn. **Motion passed 9-0-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the Select Board Meeting of September 9, 2014.